

## STATE OF IOWA

CHESTER J. CULVER, GOVERNOR PATTY JUDGE, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

**NEWS RELEASE**For Immediate Release
August 19, 2009

For More Information: Elaine Watkins-Miller, 515-281-5651 elaine.watkins-miller@iowa.gov

## Iowa Second in the Nation for the Highest Average ACT Composite Score

**DES MOINES**, **Iowa** – Iowa students earned the second highest average ACT score in the nation in 2009, according to results released today by ACT.

The average ACT composite score for lowa students this year was 22.4, which is the same as last year. lowa has the second highest average composite score for states testing the majority of their graduating seniors. Minnesota is again first with 22.7 out of a possible 36.

"Today's numbers show that lowa's students are some of the best in the nation," said Governor Chet Culver. "Yet, while these are numbers are impressive, we must continue to strive for educational excellence. As Governor, I will continue to do everything possible to make our schools some of the best in the world, and give our children every opportunity for future success."

African-American students made the greatest gain compared to last year, with a 0.5 composite score increase. African-American students had an average composite score of 17.8 in 2008 and jumped to 18.3 in 2009. In addition, more African-American students took the test, going from 435 last year to 448 this year. Overall, minority participation increased by 107 students, relative to the class of 2008.

"It is important to measure the quality of an education system by the outcomes it produces," said Iowa Department of Education Director Judy Jeffrey. "We continue to lead the nation in graduation rates, SAT scores and ACT scores."

The total number of students that took the test this year was 22,377, which is 59 percent of the 2009 graduating class. This is slightly less than last year when 22,950 students took the test, but the 2009 graduating class was also smaller.

Results also indicate that more students are reporting taking at least three years each of math, science and social studies and four years of English in high school. In 2009, 78 percent or 17,450 students reported taking these core courses. While in 2008, 69 percent or 15,732 students did so. It is likely this

Iowa Department of Education

**News Release** 

Page 2 of 2

number will continue to increase as students meet the statewide graduation requirements for all students. Starting with the graduating class of 2011, each student must complete a core academic program that includes four years of English/language arts, three years of mathematics, three years of science, and three years of social studies (4-3-3-3). In addition, lowa school districts will soon be implementing the lowa Core Curriculum, which requires that students learn identified essential concepts and skill sets for literacy, mathematics, science and social studies, as well as 21st century learning skills (civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability skills).

In lowa, those who reported taking core courses achieved an average composite ACT score of 23.1. Those that reported taking lighter loads in core areas had an average composite score of 20.1. This compares to the nationwide score of 22.0 and 19.1, respectively.

The ACT is a curriculum-based achievement test designed to measure the skills and knowledge that are taught in schools and deemed important for first-year college students to possess. The ACT is made up of four separate exams in English, reading, mathematics and science. The ACT is administered in all 50 states.

The lowa Department of Education works with the State of Iowa Board of Education to provide oversight, supervision and support for the state education system, which includes public elementary and secondary schools, nonpublic schools that receive state accreditation, area education agencies, community colleges and teacher preparation programs. The department is committed to high levels of learning, achievement and performance for all students, so they will become successful members of their community and the workforce.

###